

month board. His mother's untimely death, when Mr. Branson was a junior, put a financial strain on the family and he could no longer afford to stay on campus. He got a job at a tourist home that paid \$2 a month and provided him lodging in the basement furnace room, which was permeated with coal dust.

Despite these unpleasant conditions, he had the determination to continue his education. Mr. Branson graduated from Storer College's High School program in 1941 and returned to Shepherdstown. The quest for a job took him to New York City and Connecticut but he eventually returned to Shepherdstown where he briefly worked at Shepherd College.

In 1942, he married Ruby Washington and shortly thereafter was inducted into the U.S. Army and stationed at Fort Hood, Texas. He was an assistant gunner in the 827th Tank Destroyer Battalion, Company, C, Third Platoon. After training in North Africa, Mr. Branson was sent to Europe. He landed in Marseilles. He and his battalion took part in the invasion and liberation of Southern France. Within the next few days, they moved north towards the battle front. Despite waist deep snow, they finally reached Strasbourg and headed toward Luxembourg. From December to January he fought in the Battle of the Bulge, the last great effort of the Nazi war machine to avoid defeat. After a month of fighting on the ground, the air support arrived and the tide began to turn in favor of the allied forces.

After fighting in the European theater for several months, Mr. Branson found himself on a ship headed for the Pacific theater to join that fight. However, while on route, to Japan, a voice on the ship's loudspeaker announced the end of the war. The ship returned to the United States. Mr. Branson was honorably discharged from the Army on October 3, 1945.

Upon returning to Shepherdstown, he and his wife purchased the home in which they still live. After working for a year in local orchards and at the local Army hospital, he was persuaded by his wife to attend college. He graduated from Storer College with a bachelor's degree. He served as a teacher and football coach in the Luray, Virginia public schools until 1956, when he returned to Shepherdstown once again. He worked in the patient relations department of the local Veterans' Hospital until his retirement in 1985.

In addition to working and raising a family, Mr. Branson served on the Shepherdstown Town Council from 1974 to 2002. During his tenure on the council, he spearheaded the cleaning of Back Alley and the paving of streets in the predominantly African American East and West End communities within the town. He insured that the interests of the African American community were not forgotten in the deliberations and the decisions of the council and fought to preserve the small-town environment of Shepherdstown while assuring that all members of the community had access to basic services. Mr. Branson is a member of St. John the Baptist Church and is chairperson emeritus of St. John's Deacon Board.

Mr. Branson was given the President's Award in recognition of his service to the community. I want to recognize him because of the odds he overcame and his determination to make a difference for ordinary people.

INTRODUCTION OF THE READY TO TEACH ACT OF 2003

HON. HOWARD P. "BUCK" McKEON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 2003

Mr. McKEON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Ready to Teach Act, a bill I am cosponsoring along with Mr. GINGREY, to help improve the quality of our nation's teacher preparation programs.

There is widespread awareness that the subject matter knowledge and teaching skills of teachers play a central role in the success of elementary and secondary education reform. More than half of the 2.2 million teachers that America's schools will need to hire over the next 10 years will be first-time teachers, and they will need to be well-prepared for the challenges of today's classrooms. For these reasons, the nation's attention has increasingly focused on the role that institutions of higher education and States play in ensuring that new teachers have the content knowledge and teaching skills they need to ensure that all students are held to higher standards.

Accordingly, the Ready to Teach Act authorizes three types of teacher training grants that each play a unique, yet critical role in the education of tomorrow's teachers. State grant funds must be used to reform teacher preparation requirements and ensure that current and future teachers are highly qualified. Partnership grants allow effective partners to join together, combining strengths and resources to train highly qualified teachers and achieve success where it matters most—in the classroom. Teacher recruitment grants will help bring high quality individuals into teacher programs, and ultimately put more highly qualified teachers into classrooms. This legislation addresses key objectives to improve the quality of teacher preparation:

1. **Accountability:** While current higher education law contains some annual reporting requirements, these reporting measures have proven ineffective in measuring the true quality of teacher preparation programs. In fact, the current requirements have often been manipulated, leaving data skewed and often irrelevant. The Ready to Teach Act includes accountability provisions that will strengthen reporting measures and hold teacher preparation programs accountable for providing accurate and useful information.

2. **Flexibility:** The Ready to Teach Act recognizes that flexibility should exist in methods used for training highly qualified teachers, and for that reason, would allow funds to be used for innovative methods in teacher preparation programs, such as charter colleges of education, which can provide an alternative gateway for teachers to become highly qualified. Pioneering programs such as charter colleges of education would also implement systems to gauge a true measure of teacher effectiveness—the academic achievement of students.

3. **Effectiveness:** In addition to strengthening accountability measures, the Ready to Teach Act increases the effectiveness and quality in teacher training programs by including provisions to focus training on the skills and knowledge needed to prepare highly qualified teachers. The bill places a renewed emphasis on a broad range of skills required for effective teaching, such as the use of advanced tech-

nology in the classroom, rigorous academic content knowledge, scientifically based research, and challenging state student academic content standards.

Institutions of higher education have a great deal of responsibility in contributing to the preparation of our nation's teachers—this bill will make sure they're meeting their responsibilities. I commend Congressman GINGREY for introducing the Ready to Teach Act, I believe this bill will help to ensure that the best and the brightest teachers are teaching our children.

INTRODUCTION OF THE READY TO TEACH ACT OF 2003

HON. JOHN A. BOEHNER

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 2003

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Ready to Teach Act of 2003, introduced today by Representative Gingrey. The Ready to Teach Act is the first, in what will be a series of bills, the Committee on Education and the Workforce will consider in our continuing efforts to reauthorize the Higher Education Act.

The No Child Left Behind Act calls for a highly qualified teacher in every classroom by the end of the 2005–2006 school year, lending new urgency to the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act as we seek to ensure that teacher colleges are producing highly qualified graduates. Provisions in the Ready to Teach Act complement the No Child Left Behind Act and will help to improve the quality and accountability of teacher preparation programs to ensure that highly qualified teachers are teaching our children.

As we work to place highly qualified teachers in classrooms across the nation, I am particularly pleased that this legislation allows for innovative programs that provide alternative options to the traditional teacher training programs. Proposals outlined in the bill, such as charter colleges of education, provide a much-needed alternate route to training highly qualified and effective teachers. This bill takes the important step of recognizing that individuals seeking to enter the teaching profession often have varied backgrounds—and by creating flexible approaches that step outside the box, these individuals can become highly qualified teachers through training programs as unique as their individual experiences.

The key to producing highly qualified teachers is not the path by which they travel, but the destination they reach. Teachers trained through innovative options, or certified through alternate means, will still be held to the same standards of accountability and quality, but will not be constrained by artificial requirements that could place barriers between high quality individuals and the classrooms where they are desperately needed.

In addition to innovative options such as alternative training and certification options to prepare highly qualified teachers, the Ready to Teach Act makes several improvements to the programs responsible for training the teachers of tomorrow. The bill authorizes three types of grants, each with a specific and important role to play in the training of America's teachers.

State and partnership grants under the Act must be used to reform teacher preparation

requirements, coordinate with teacher activities under Title II of the No Child Left Behind Act, and ensure that current and future teachers are highly qualified. Authorized grant activities will place a renewed emphasis on the skills needed to meet the highly qualified standard: the use of advanced technology in the classroom, rigorous academic content knowledge, scientifically based research, and challenging state student academic content standards. In particular, states are authorized to use grant funds for innovative methods for teacher preparation programs, such as charter colleges of education, that exchange flexibility in meeting state requirements for institutional commitments to produce results-based outcomes for teacher education graduates—measured based on increased student academic achievement.

The Ready to Teach Act authorizes partnership grants to enable effective partners to join together, combining strengths and resources to train highly qualified teachers and achieve success in the classroom. These partnerships will require faculty of participating teacher preparation programs to serve with a highly qualified teacher in the classroom, allowing effective in-class experience to ensure that highly qualified teachers are truly prepared to teach.

Teacher recruitment grants under the Act will help bring high quality individuals into teacher preparation programs and gives a funding priority for applicants that will emphasize measures to recruit minorities into the teaching profession, providing a teaching workforce that is both highly qualified and diverse.

The Ready to Teach Act will also hold teacher preparation programs accountable for preparing highly qualified teachers. While current higher education law contains annual reporting requirements, these reporting measures have proven ineffective in measuring the true quality of teacher preparation programs. In fact, the current requirements have often been manipulated, leaving data skewed and often irrelevant. The Ready to Teach Act includes accountability provisions that will strengthen reporting measures and hold teacher preparation programs accountable for providing accurate and useful information.

This bill makes needed reforms to improve the quality and accountability of our nation's teacher preparation programs. I would like to commend Mr. Gingrey for his work on the Ready to Teach Act. I would also like to thank Mr. McKeon, Chairman of the Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness, for his continuing efforts to improve all aspects of our country's higher education system. I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and believe that this legislation will enjoy broad support in the Congress.

INTRODUCTION OF THE READY TO TEACH ACT OF 2003

HON. PHIL GINGREY

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 2003

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Ready to Teach Act of 2003 to reauthorize teacher quality provisions under Title II of the Higher Education Act through fis-

cal year 2008. The first in what will be a series of bills to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, the Ready to Teach Act seeks to meet the call of the No Child Left Behind Act to place a highly qualified teacher in every classroom by making improvements that will help ensure teacher training programs are producing well-prepared teachers to meet the needs of America's students.

The caliber of teacher education programs at institutions of higher education has come under increased scrutiny over the past several years. Among other things, teacher preparation programs have been criticized for providing prospective teachers with inadequate time to learn subject matter; for teaching a superficial curriculum; and for being unduly fragmented, with courses not linked to practice teaching and with education faculty isolated from their arts and sciences faculty colleagues.

Accordingly, the Ready to Teach Act authorizes competitively awarded grants to: (1) increase student academic achievement; (2) improve the quality of the current and future teaching force by improving the preparation of prospective teachers and enhancing professional development activities; (3) hold institutions of higher education accountable for preparing highly qualified teachers; (4) and recruit highly qualified individuals, including minorities and individuals from other occupations, into the teaching force. As in current law, funds for these grants will be distributed in the following manner: 45 percent of the funds are reserved for State grants; 45 percent of the funds are reserved for partnership grants; and 10 percent of the funds are reserved for teacher recruitment grants.

State grants under the Act must be used to reform teacher preparation requirements, coordinate with teacher activities under Title II of the No Child Left Behind Act, and ensure that current and future teachers are highly qualified. Programs administered through state grants would focus on effective teacher preparation, placing a renewed emphasis on the skills needed to meet the highly qualified standard: the use of advanced technology in the classroom, rigorous academic content knowledge, scientifically based research, and challenging state student academic content standards.

In addition, states are authorized to use grant funds for innovative methods for teacher preparation programs, such as charter colleges of education, which can provide an alternative gateway for teachers to become highly qualified. Teacher advancement and retention initiatives will also be created, such as merit-based performance systems and professional growth opportunities. These activities will help ensure that schools are able to recruit highly qualified teachers while having the necessary flexibility to remove incompetent or unqualified teachers.

The Ready to Teach Act authorizes partnership grants so educational entities can combine expertise and resources to improve teacher training. Each eligible partnership must include at least: (1) a high quality teacher preparation program at an institution of higher education; (2) a school of arts and sciences; (3) a high need LEA; and (4) a public or private educational organization. Among other things, partnership activities will help to ensure that teachers are able to use advanced technology effectively in the classroom, ad-

dress the needs of students with different learning styles (particularly students with disabilities), and receive training in methods of improving student behavior in the classroom.

Teacher recruitment grants under the Ready to Teach Act will help bring high quality individuals into teacher programs, and ultimately put more highly qualified teachers into classrooms. The Ready to Teach Act recognizes the need to ensure that high need local educational agencies are able to effectively recruit highly qualified teachers, and will help answer that need by increasing the number of teachers being trained. Additionally, this legislation places a priority on applicants that will emphasize measures to recruit minorities into the teaching profession.

Current law provisions in Title II of the Higher Education Act include annual reporting requirements to hold states and teacher preparation programs accountable for producing a competent teaching force. The Ready to Teach Act strengthens these reporting requirements to ensure complete and effective information is available to determine the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs. Under this legislation:

States must report annually to the Secretary of Education on the percentage of students passing state certification or licensure and rank the quality of all teacher preparation programs in the state.

The Secretary of Education must analyze teacher qualifications and preparation in the United States, providing: a comparison of states' efforts to improve teaching quality; and the national mean and median scores on any standardized test that is used in 1 or more state for teacher certification or licensure.

Institutions of higher education with teacher preparation programs must report on the number of students passing state certification requirements, with improved reporting requirements that will prevent "gaming" of data that leave results without meaning. Additionally, institutions must compare both pass rates and average scores of their program participants with those of other programs in the state, making effective comparison data available to measure program quality.

The Ready to Teach Act of 2003 will improve the quality and accountability of our nation's teacher preparation programs. I ask my colleagues to support this legislation and look forward to working with the distinguished Chairman of the Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness, Mr. McKEON, and the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, Mr. KILDEE, to move this bill so we can ensure our children are receiving a world class education.

INTRODUCTION OF THE HISPANIC HEALTH IMPROVEMENT ACT

HON. HILDA L. SOLIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 2003

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join my colleague, Congressman CIRO RODRIGUEZ, in introducing the Hispanic Health Improvement Act of 2003.

Every 24 hours in this country, over 2,700 people are diagnosed with diabetes, just one of the multitude of diseases and illnesses plaguing our Nation. And of these 2,700 daily